

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

155 guilt, especially with regard to sex, produce the psychological disposition
152 to sexual jealousy institutionalized in this community as well as in many
[694] other communities in rural Egypt? It is well known that in Egypt disputes
over land, water and women rank as three of the most common causes
of crime.¹ This does not mean that sibling rivalry and sex prohibitions
are the only causes, but seem to provide the psychological field for the
moral and religious values connected with fidelity and the propriety of
sexual jealousy. A woman is identified not only with 'shame' but also
with 'honour' and to preserve one's honour is tantamount to avoid ex-
posure to shame.²

[184] These attitudes, according to Kardiner, would also help to understand
the dichotomy of sexes and to prevent sexual jealousies from coming out
to open hostilities. They also appear to be one of the weapons of social
equilibrium and of preserving in-male and in-female solidarity.³

599 Here it is also possible to give some satisfactory answer to the connec-
tion between the nature of the community and its demands on individuals
as represented by sexual regulations. The central and principal quality
in a polite (muaddab) or virtuous person is his conformity to the norms
governing sexual behaviour; the flouting of which in any manner would
condemn him as impolite and vicious irrespective of his other qualities.
Morality and virtue are primarily connected with stringent sexual con-
trols. The villagers, although envying the city dwellers their material
comfort, deplore their moral laxity, e.g. women's emancipation in dress,
love affairs, use of cosmetics, women's participation in men's work. In this
community I heard of no cases of adultery or illegitimate children for the
last thirty years, though cases of homosexuality and jokes about sexual
pleasure from animals are not uncommon amongst the adolescents and
young men. Stringent sexual controls are an essential agent for the main-
tenance of solidarity, the cohesion and the orderly living of a group with
its puritanic religious code and its social organization based, among other
things, on a clear-cut sex dichotomy.⁴

882 Whatever views may be held about the psychological problems con-
885 nected with adolescence in Silwa, this stage is certainly the prologue to
the full status of adulthood which is eventually attained by marriage.
585 Marriage, after circumcision, marks the greatest ceremonial occasion in
the individual's life. The best way of describing marriage conditions in
Silwa is to give an account of a marriage ceremony which the writer

¹ Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East*, London, 1948.

² Cf. J. C. Flugel, *Men and their Motives*, London, 1943, and Ernest Jones, *Papers on Psycho-analysis*, where he writes: 'The ultimate source of the fear and guilt that lie behind all these reactions (of sexual jealousy) is the relationship to another potential man and it is derived from the boy's unconscious fixation on childish attitudes; it is hard for him to "picture" a woman quite apart from another man to whom she secretly belongs.' p. 483.

³ A. Kardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 476-7.

⁴ See Margaret Read, 'The Moral Code of the Ngoni and their former Military State', in *Africa*, Vol. XI, 1938.

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THE FAMILY.

837 Mohammed's dictum regarding wine is also true of love—it has many good sides, but also a great many and even more that are bad and dangerous. The Prophet has therefore cut Cupid's wings as well as he could; by the armour of concealment he protected the sexes from the swiftly wounding arrow of the god, and granted to his faithful believers the joys of domestic love in full, perhaps in too full, measure so soon, and to as great an extent as they could do homage to them. Matches are made early, and love's thirst is usually quenched in an orderly and legitimate manner. Fallen virgins, illegitimate children, bachelors, and old maids hardly exist in Mohammedan countries, although there are perhaps more unfaithful wives and husbands, and especially wives who have gone astray and been divorced, than elsewhere. Existing regulations render it difficult for these faithless members of both sexes to meet directly; but this is managed by the herd of procurers and procuresses, who are comparatively numerous in the East, though held in the deepest contempt. "Women contrive to meet their gallants, even though shut up in a box," says the Oriental himself in a very common proverb, as well as in many a tale. Adultery committed by a woman was punished with drowning down to a short time ago; among the ancient Egyptians by cutting off the nose. But the Mussulman is proud with regard to the above-mentioned state of matters, and listens with scorn to the statistical revelations made by the states of the West, which suffer from all kinds of moral sores no less than the more dignified "sick man."

595 Nothing shall here be said in approval of polygamy, but to those who have had lengthened opportunities for watching its effects it does not appear as a rule so black as Western imagination is accustomed at a distance to paint it. A thorough panegyric would perhaps show that it even possesses some advantages on moral grounds; and in the West also it certainly exists in some social circles. In the East it has prevailed from the earliest times, from the Bedouin to the king,